United Nations S/2006/318

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 May 2006
English
Original: French

Letter dated 23 May 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter addressed to you by Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

06-36058 (E) 260506 260506

Annex

Letter dated 18 May 2006 from the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from 1 December 2005 to 30 March 2006. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

[Original: English]

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. In its resolution 1510 (2003) the Security Council requested the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide reports on the implementation of its mandate. This is the ninth such report by NATO and it covers the period from 1 December 2005 to 30 March 2006.

2. As at 24 March 2006, ISAF had 8,121 personnel from 26 NATO countries and 467 from 10 non-NATO countries. These numbers are due to increase with the upcoming ISAF expansion to region South.

Overall security situation

3. The threat continues to be diverse and differs significantly across the regions of Afghanistan. It is expected that the opposing militant forces will continue targeting ISAF, Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghan National Security Forces. The trend over the past few months towards greater use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks is expected to continue, but caution should be applied to attributing all of this to the opposing militant forces. Also of note is the threat generated by illegal armed groups. Throughout Afghanistan, such groups operate, prompting and reacting to tribal and ethnic tensions, political friction and criminal activity. Much of the tension is a result of the narcotics trade and this will remain a significant threat to security and stability for the foreseeable future.

Security situation in ISAF areas of operation

4. **Kabul.** Kabul remains a primary strategic and operational focal point in Afghanistan, owing to the large concentration of international agencies and multinational forces.

5. **Regions North and West.** Regions North and West will continue to be areas influenced by rival factions, power brokers and criminal groups, but there are also indications of increased Taliban and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin activity.

6. **Security situation outside ISAF areas of operation.** In regions South and East, the Operation Enduring Freedom currently faces a multitude of threats, including residual Taliban groups, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin elements, and foreign fighters. Cross-border operations and infiltrations along the border with Pakistan will continue. In these regions the opposing militant forces currently retain the capability and the intent to engage the Operation Enduring Freedom forces and the Afghan National Security Forces, in addition to provincial and local-level Government of Afghanistan officials and workers. This makes it extremely difficult for both aid and reconstruction efforts to make progress and for the Government of Afghanistan to exert its influence. As ISAF expands it is more than likely that the opposing militant forces will test ISAF resolve and seek to determine its ability to counter their attacks.

Report on the ISAF mission

7. ISAF has continued executing its assistance mission in the north, west, and capital regions of Afghanistan through the conduct of normal framework operations. Joint security patrols with both the Afghan National Army and, to a lesser extent, the Afghan National Police have increased, while ISAF is firmly following the principle of Afghan National Security Forces being at the forefront.

8. The ISAF response to the Afghan events surrounding the "cartoon demonstrations" that occurred early in February 2006 in Kabul, Herat, Chagcharan, Pol-e Khomri and Maimana was successful. Of note is the incident on 7 February 2006 when the personnel of the Maimana Provincial Reconstruction Team were attacked by an aggressive mob of 200 to 300 people. The crowd using small arms, grenades and improvised incendiary devices broke through the main entrance to the Team compound. The Team personnel showed great restraint and professionalism during the incident. Using warning shots, stun grenades, rubber bullets and riot control gas they managed to keep the rioters from entering the buildings. The ISAF Northern Quick Reaction Force moved to reinforce the Maimana Provincial Reconstruction Team, while the Afghan National Police eventually became more engaged, reportedly firing into the crowd. It is important to note that the Afghan National Police in Pol-e-Khomri, Herat and Kabul played a significant part in establishing calm during demonstrations.

9. Figures over the past months clearly pointed to an increased number of incidents involving improvised explosive devices throughout the country, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of all incidents. As an example, on 17 March 2006, the last vehicle of a German patrol was struck by a remotely controlled Improvised Explosive Device in Feyzabad. Initial reports indicated that the device comprised 200 to 300 grams of TNT or similar military explosive placed inside a pressure cooker. These attacks are not only targeting ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom forces. On the same day, an Improvised Explosive Device struck against an Afghan National Police vehicle en route to Kandahar and eight police officers were reported killed.

10. The high proportion of incidents involving Improvised Explosive Devices started with the National Assembly and Provincial Council election period but continued over the winter. While the threat from Improvised Explosive Devices is theatre-wide, regions South and East have known far higher reported activity. These are regions with intricate interests between the operation militant forces and drug traffickers. Against the prospect of ISAF expansion in these two regions, the build-up phase will be critical. It is expected that ISAF will have to deal with the Improvised Explosive Device threat at a level rather similar to that which Operation Enduring Freedom forces currently experience.

11. Since 2005, the operation militant forces have resorted increasingly to suicide attacks. Several incidents were registered throughout the country during the first three months of the year. While it is still assessed that suicide attacks run counter to Afghan culture, so far about one third of suicide attackers are suspected to be Afghan nationals. The use of suicide attackers may indicate that hardliners have taken control within the Operation Militant Forces.

Security sector reform status

12. **Disbandment of illegal armed groups.** The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is transiting to the follow-on, Afghan-led process of disbandment of illegal armed groups. The disarmament and demobilization phase officially ended on 7 July 2005 while the reintegration process is scheduled to continue until 30 June 2006. ISAF continues to monitor reintegration in order to best ensure the overall success of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme. Militias or individuals that did not enter and comply with that process are now referred to as illegal armed groups. The implementation of the three-phase disbandment concept started with voluntary compliance preceding the successful National Assembly and Provincial Council elections. The Government of Afghanistan is now negotiating compliance and Government officials suspected of links to illegal armed groups continue to be monitored for their involvement. The next phase will see the "top 4" commanders of illegal armed groups in each province targeted for compliance with the disbandment process.

13. **Counter-narcotics.** The international community considers the drug trade to be Afghanistan's principal problem while counter-narcotics is a complex campaign involving several agencies working in eight pillars.[1] Without undertaking any direct military action against narcotics targets, the ISAF contribution to counter-narcotics covers a wide spectrum: it continues to participate in working groups and meetings in all pillars and at all levels. The ISAF Theatre Psychological Operations element, in coordination with the Minister for Counter-Narcotics and the United Kingdom Embassy, has produced billboards, radio interviews and television spots. One billboard campaign carried a message from the Supreme Ulema of Afghanistan, stating that everything connected with the opium trade is immoral and anti-Islamic; ISAF produced approximately 2,500 posters carrying this message. ISAF headquarters produced a counter-narcotics booklet funded by the United Kingdom Embassy to aid recognition of narcotics-related material during routine operations. An information package is also being produced for the Provincial Reconstruction Team and regional area commanders that explains the alternative livelihoods programme. Long-term success depends on a combination of factors that lie outside ISAF control. The key challenges for the future will be to overcome the endemic corruption within the Government of Afghanistan and deliver accessible and viable alternative livelihoods programmes.

14. **Afghan National Army.** The capacity, capabilities and effectiveness of the Afghan National Army continue to grow but, as at March 2006, almost all units are still at a relatively low level of training. A total of 24 infantry and 16 combat support and combat service support Kandaks have been trained. Afghan National Army units are able to conduct operations up to company level, but only with support from the coalition forces and the United States embedded training teams. On the other hand, situational awareness and training support and coordination have been improved. For instance, engineer training has enhanced the effectiveness of Afghan National Army units and improved the perception of the population through the completion of some road improvement projects and upgrades of the Kabul entry points.

[1] The eight pillars are (1) building institutions, (2) information campaign, (3) alternative livelihoods, (4) interdiction and law enforcement, (5) criminal justice, (6) eradication, (7) demand reduction and (8) regional cooperation.

15. **Afghan National Police.** The effectiveness of the Afghan National Police is still assessed as low. Consequently the Afghan National Army will play a major role in the provision of security to Afghanistan until police effectiveness improves. Corruption and links with local criminal organizations, together with lack of logistic support, a high illiteracy rate and inconsistent pay still hinder the reliability of the Afghan National Police. As a consequence, the people of Afghanistan still hesitate to see the police as an access to justice or a solution to problems. The Ministry of the Interior accelerated the basic police-training programme and set the goal of having a fully trained Afghan National Police and Afghan Border Police with a combined force of 62,000 police officers deployed nationwide by the end of 2010. Now the challenge will be to raise the level of their abilities. ISAF continues to concentrate on military specialties such as search procedures, checkpoints, and weapons handling. Provincial Reconstruction Teams, where police advisers are present, will also continue to provide opportunities for training of the Afghan National Police.

16. **Judicial reform.** Judicial reform activities continue in coordination with Italy as the partner country. ISAF is striving to increase its assistance to judicial reform by encouraging its Provincial Reconstruction Teams to collect and assess data related to judicial shortfalls in order to assist the Government of Afghanistan and lead nation in the allocation of resources and development of infrastructure.

17. **ISAF air operations.** Of major importance in this mountainous landlocked country, the ability of ISAF to manoeuvre and sustain operations, airfield capabilities and flight safety shows steady improvement. Mazar-e-Sharif now has a runway-lighting system installed. Herat has a formally established Class D airspace and is subject to runway repair work to retain its full strategic airlift capability. Kabul International Airport achieved precision approach capability and is awaiting formal certification by the appropriate authorities.

Future ISAF operations

18. **Expansion.** The execution directive for operation plan 10302 (Rev. 1) supporting ISAF expansion will become effective on 4 May 2006. The revised operation plan provides guidance for expansion into region South, then East. Also on 4 May, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps headquarters will take over the ISAF headquarters rotation from Italy, which is ending its tenure. Also part of ongoing expansion preparations is the NATO decision to transform the regional area coordinators into regional commanders in the north and the west; this is planned for 1 June 2006. The Kabul Multinational Brigade will also transition to regional command capital early in August.

19. **Operational mentoring and liaison teams.** The revised operation plans establish this concept of partnering between ISAF units and Afghan National Army units. Starting with NATO expansion into the south, ISAF will enhance its role in Afghan National Army training through the establishment of the operational mentoring and liaison teams throughout the ISAF area of operations. The previous strategy has been significantly broadened. ISAF will now assist with bringing the Afghan National Army to full self-sufficiency through operational mentoring, facilitating continuation training and supporting army units to increase their capability and reach. This will include the coordination of Afghan National Army operations with those of ISAF to achieve synergy, using the Operational Mentoring

and Liaison Teams as the primary vehicle by which this will be achieved. The development of the Afghan National Army will be supported by such teams at the Kandak, brigade and corps level. The teams are therefore critical to the development of the full operational capability of the Afghan National Army. The willingness of States to provide seasoned and efficient Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams in sufficient quantity must be strongly encouraged as it is directly linked to the NATO objective of empowering Afghan security forces to take full responsibility for security throughout the country.

20. **Programme Takhim-e-Solh (reconciliation).** The Government of Afghanistan is moving ahead with its national reconciliation initiative known by its Afghan name, Programme *Takhim-e-Solh*. The terms of reference establishing the responsibilities of the Programme's commission were released on 23 January 2006. Professor Mujaddedi, former President of Afghanistan and head of the Programme, has formally invited the Commander of ISAF to participate in a two-day conference on support to the Programme from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (Kabul, 10 and 11 April). Professor Mujaddedi has repeatedly called for a more robust engagement of NATO/ISAF in support of the Programme, especially in the light of the future expansion of ISAF to the south.

Summary

21. ISAF continues to make solid progress towards mission accomplishment. However, there are significant challenges that will need to be overcome in the coming months, both in terms of expansion and in meeting security threats. The enhanced coordination being achieved between ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom, while maintaining separate operations, forms the basis for successful further expansion into regions South and East.

22. Having a new Constitution, an elected President, National Assembly and Provincial Councils in place signals the successful implementation of the Bonn Agreement. As these fledgling institutions remain fragile, the international community agreed at the London Conference on 30 and 31 January 2006 to commit itself to providing resources and support to the Government of Afghanistan for the next five years in order to provide assistance in realizing the overarching goals of a stable country with a growing economy fully integrated into the global community. These aims were endorsed at the London Conference through the signing of the Afghan Compact. A Coordinating and Monitoring Board will work to ensure implementation of the reconstruction and development aims set out in the document. The Compact's objectives are directly linked to the accomplishment of the ISAF mission and to the eventual exit of NATO.